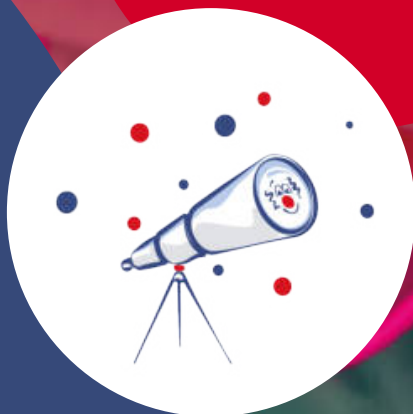




Healthcare clowning in Palestine

How the RED NOSES Palestine healthcare clowns are bringing hope to people in need of joy

Clowns'
Perceptions &
Aspirations





Clowns' Perceptions & Aspirations

Introduction



Goal

As the healthcare clowns play a significant role in promoting the message and implementing the mission of RNPS, qualitative interviews were carried out between September and December of 2023 to understand the perception of RNPS healthcare clowns regarding their impact on the targeted groups and explore their aspirations in the future.

Study design

10 in-depth phone interviews were conducted with 5 male and 5 female healthcare clowns. The goal of the study is to explore how the healthcare clowns are bringing happy moments to people in need of joy, assisting them in re-establishing positive emotions that will strengthen their sense of hope and resilience. As the culture of healthcare clowning is still relatively new in Palestine, people are not fully aware of its significant impact. In this report, we will examine how the clowns perceive their job and how the people perceive them.

Topics

This study covers several important topics, such as how they describe their experience as healthcare clowns, the impact of their work, the workplace environment, obstacles they encounter, and future goals, etc.

Data analysis

The interviews were recorded, translated into English, and analysed to produce this report that includes the findings and some quotes. All of the research phases were implemented internally by RNPS following the research ethics and RED NOSES values.

The data were entered into an Excel sheet, each question was summarised and coded. Thematic analysis was conducted to capture the underlying meaning of the coded data.

Main findings



- **Clowns and healthcare clowning:** RNPS clowns think that the experience of healthcare clowning is unique and distinctive on various levels, and they feel proud of their work as they spread a humanitarian message and create an impact on the targeted audiences. This makes them convinced of what they are doing.
- **Factors that make RNPS clowns satisfied with their work:** effective teamwork, ensuring that every child receives the same amount of time, making an impact, adequate communication with both RNPS and the targeted institutions, and receiving positive feedback from people.
- **The working environment:** all of the RNPS clowns evaluated the working environment in hospitals and elderly care homes positively where they are treated with respect, noting that there has been a significant improvement in people's acceptance of their work.
- **Capacity building:** capacity building was described as useful, adequate, informative, and enjoyable, and they seek to improve their skills in the future.
- **Challenges:** public transportation, people's perceptions, social restrictions, and time constraints are the four main obstacles that clowns try to overcome.
- **Laughter impact:** all of the interviewed clowns think that laughter is a way to ease discomfort, accept therapy, facilitate treatment, boost immunity, and relieve pain.





Healthcare Clowning Characteristics



The experience of healthcare clowning is unique and distinctive

Positive opinions were highlighted when the clowns were asked to assess their experience as healthcare clowns. A unique and different experience from any other profession was among the best ways to describe it.

Professionally speaking, it helps to enhance their artistic skills. It equipped them with the strength and emotional stability they needed to overcome the challenges they faced in such a challenging environment.

From a personal perspective, healthcare clowning is a means to generate income, educate the clowns about diseases and the hospital environment, foster interpersonal relationships, and to unleash their creative thinking because it relies on improvisation.

At the community level, this experience plays a significant and unique role in the Palestinian society.



"This job motivates me to improve myself, adapt to changing circumstances, and employ new tools. It constantly challenges my capacity to think creatively as an artist."



"Working with RED NOSES for seven years allowed me to develop myself into a strong, confident person who isn't scared to stand in front of people."

Professional development, the message they convey, and the impact they create are the main convincing aspects for RNPS clowns

The characters of the clowns and the skills they have gained are among the most convincing aspects of their professional development.

"It's simple to be an artist or musician, but focusing all of your skills on one area of expertise—healthcare clowning—is beneficial and something that our country needs."

Furthermore, the clowns mentioned disseminating a message of humanity. In laughter there is hope is the core message of RNPS work.

"I work with people who need a smile, and I can improve their psychological status. We also can change the hospital atmosphere for everyone, not only for sick children. We convey a message of humanity. It's wonderful that people are responding to our work."

The third convincing aspect is the impact of our work, as it improves the psychological status, and acceptance of treatment, and infuses positive energy into the clowns.

"I recognise the importance of what we do when we can release people's energies in a very tough environment filled with sadness and frustration."

The highest majority of the interviewed RNPS clowns believe that nothing is unconvincing in their work

As the culture of healthcare clowning is still relatively new in Palestine, people are not fully aware of the significant impact of it. RNPS clowns have made their position clear, and they appear to be confident in their actions regardless of public perception. Three primary arguments were raised concerning the unconvincing aspects from the perspective of the clowns: the idea that they cannot change the reality of sick children; the idea of repeating some activities over time; and the difficulties of working in different locations.



"I feel like a hero who wants to save every child and put an end to their sickness, but in reality they are still ill, and we felt sad that we were unable to cure them. However, the psychological supervision we receive helps us to overcome this issue, and we accept the fact that we can't change everything."

"I am not convinced of making a clown work in different locations. The city of Ramallah is different from Jenin."

"I try not to be bored during the paediatric visits, but when I do, I try to be spontaneous and utilise my singing and poetry skills."



Moments of Pride



RNPS clowns feel proud everyday

Several prominent moments were highlighted including:

- Changing the atmosphere of the place they visit; such as leaving the room with positive vibes, making the children and their parents to forget pain even for few moments especially before going into the surgery.
- Communication and interaction between Healthcare Clowns and their audiences such as children or the elderly.
- Changing the mood of children which in turn made it easier for them to accept food and treatment.

"A woman crying for her sick daughter in the operating room when I saw her in Rafidia Hospital. My coworker and I went into the room and started to comfort her. We were able to transform someone who was crying into someone who was laughing, and from someone who was refusing to talk into someone who was interacting with other people, it was a beautiful moment."



Factors for satisfaction



Teamwork

How the team members collaborate



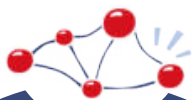
Equality

When all children are given adequate time to share happiness with them



Impact

When a child accepts food and treatment, when we gain positive energy from the visits, when we break barriers with each other, and strengthen relationships with each other



Communication

Good coordination with hospitals and elderly care homes. Also, the manner in which the organisation handles us and its attitude towards us



Response

People's reactions during the visit

What are the factors that make you feel satisfied about your visit?



All of the RNPS clowns evaluated the working environment in hospitals and elderly care homes positively

It is described as welcoming, cooperative, and respectful. This is connected to the general public's and medical professionals' growing awareness of the significant roles of the healthcare clowns in society. However, a small percentage of the clowns mentioned that their workplace was challenging for them.



“There is a collaboration from medical staff who give us information about the physical and mental health conditions of sick children. This facilitates the use of proper tools for each child.”



"The workshops I attended and the knowledge I gained, were all valuable and thoughtful in a methodical and cohesive way. As an artist, all of my abilities have developed within the organisation."

The capacity building was described as useful, adequate, informative, and enjoyable

It raises awareness on the psychological status of others and how to interact with them.

The training helped in developing the clowns' characters and skills.

Although the psychological supervision is useful, it is recommended to change it to an individual approach rather than a collective one.

More workshops are needed such as music and voice training.

Public transportation, people's perceptions, social restrictions, and time constraints are the four main obstacles that clowns try to overcome

- Public transportation is difficult due to the presence of checkpoints, or reaching remote locations, especially for the outreach visits.
- Facing people who do not accept our work, still, their numbers have steadily decreased over time.
- Some people may find it difficult to accept a female clown because of societal stereotypes.
- Some hospitals require more time due to the large size of their paediatric department.



"Because the paediatric section in Augusta Victoria is so large, visits are taking longer, and I suggest increasing the number of visits."



"We make sure to clarify our mission to the people when they misunderstand us, and then they accept us."



Although the communication between the clowns is being evaluated as efficient, the clowns recommend a few steps to enhance it

- Holding retreats, informal and periodic meetings.
- A personal effort is required to understand each other.
- Psychological individual follow-up is needed.





Future Aspirations



RNPS clowns are eager to capacity building in the future

These are the areas they would like to focus on:

- Music skills (Improve the music encyclopaedia, music without tools, etc.)
- Voice
- Playing new instruments, such as the Tambourine, Ukulele, Flute, Piano, and Drum
- Circus skills
- Communication skills and harmony
- Visual tricks
- Combine magic and humour
- Combine theatre with healthcare clowning



RNPS clowns see themselves as more mature and effective in the next five years

From most to least stated, these are the primary goals for the clowns over the next five years:

- Having exceptional, unique, and sophisticated talents
- Growing up and maturing
- Engaged in other programmes
- Transferring knowledge to others
- Conquering each challenge
- To complete the required curriculum and graduate



"Every visit enriches my experience, as does every interaction with a child. I want to work as a coach because I enjoy sharing my knowledge with people."



RNPS clowns believe that they are creating short-term and long-term impact

- Spreading laughter and changing the mood of the hospitalised children and their parents, which help the child to forget the pain, accept the treatment, and interact. In return, the parents will gain useful information on how to deal with their children. The communication between the children and their parents will be stronger.
- Breaking the barriers and making strong relationships, which leads remembering the clown in future visits.
- Promoting the importance of healthcare clowning and the culture of clown doctors, which will help to break the stereotyping about doctors.
- Strengthening our artistic presence in our country.
- Making the clowns feel proud of themselves.
- Healthcare clowning generates income.



“There are children who start playing, singing and learning magic tricks with us, we talk to them about their future aspirations and wishes.”



“I feel like I'm building a very tight relationship with patients and becoming a close friend of sick children as if I'm a family member, and with elderly who share their stories and memories.”

Target groups are showing respect and acceptance for RNPS clowns

Everyone treats the clowns with respect, love and a positive reaction. Only a small proportion of rejection compared to previous years.



"There's a difference between my beginning and now. People accept us, communicate with us, and need us. Humour in Healthcare workshops created a difference in how much people accept us."



"The majority of people have a positive perception of us, particularly doctors and nurses who think we represent a vital role in hospitals."



RNPS clowns demonstrated the healing power of laughter

The clowns were asked if they think laughter is a healing process and how, all of them think that laughter is a way to ease discomfort, accept therapy, facilitate treatment, boost immunity, and relieve pain. Most importantly, laughter increases the endorphins that are released by our brain, as stated.



“For me, laughter is the most important treatment because someone could die from fear, so with laughter, we change a place of pain to a place of joy.”



Conclusion & Recommendations

As the culture of healthcare clowning is still relatively new in Palestine, people are not fully aware of its significant impact. RNPS clowns have made their position clear, and they appear to be confident in their actions regardless of public perception, in addition to noticing a significant improvement in people's acceptance of their work.

This report **concludes** that all clowns believe in their job and the message they spread. They are convinced of their mission and the impact they create. They aspire to be a better version of themselves and improve their skills more in the future.

Most importantly, they all believe that laughter can ease discomfort, accept therapy, facilitate treatment, boost immunity, and relieve pain. These facts and perceptions encourage them to continue their mission and improve their skills.

The **recommendations** of the interviewed healthcare clowns were focused on the importance of continuing their work and reaching more places and audiences, in addition to developing their artistic and communication skills in the future. In this regard, they have mentioned specific trainings, therefore, RNPS administration should take future steps to design the trainings in accordance with their needs. Donors also have a role to play in supporting this sector; in light of the complex conditions in Palestine and the crucial need of children to improve their psychological status.



Who we are

RED NOSES Palestine (RNPS) is a subsidiary organisation of RED NOSES International (RNI) which is based in Vienna, Austria, and is the headquarters for the largest clown doctor group in the world. RNPS is an organisation utilising art of clowning to bring humour and laughter to people in need of joy. For the past 13 years, RNPS has been making a difference for patients, families, and medical staff in many healthcare facilities in Palestine. RNPS empowers vulnerable audiences, such as children in hospitals, people in geriatric centres, patients in rehabilitation centres, youth with mental and multiple disabilities, and other marginalised groups.

